

Search to resume this weekend for missing man

By JOHN PEPIN
Journal Munising Bureau

PARADISE — Chippewa County sheriff's investigators are planning an intensified search with cadaver dogs this weekend, hoping to find the body of an elderly retiree who vanished near his cabin at Tahquamenon Falls State Park in July.

Joseph Robert Clewley, 73, was last known to be at his rustic cabin along the north bank of the Tahquamenon River on the morning of July 13. After missing check-in calls to family members, Clewley's disappearance was reported to police.

Sheriff's deputies initiated a multi-agency search that would later be called the largest missing person's manhunt in Chippewa County history.

In recent weeks, searchers have discovered some items currently being analyzed for positive identification as belonging to Clewley. Those items have helped focus the search area.

"We found a few things that indicated he is still out there in the area," said Det. Sgt. Mike Bitnar of the Chippewa Coun-

ty Sheriff's Department.

Bitnar declined to detail publicly what was found, pending the ongoing analysis.

"Until we've confirmed something, we don't want to say too much," Bitnar said. "We definitely haven't found him."

Police presume Clewley is no longer alive.

Volunteers from Michigan Search and Rescue are expected to bring five cadaver dogs to search an area between the North Country Trail and M-123 this weekend. The team has been in the area once before looking for Clewley during the protracted search effort.

Police compiled a range of basic facts during their initial investigation.

Clewley's cabin was discovered locked. His dog was gone too. Clewley carried no cell phone, wallet, watch, walking stick, backpack, compass or water bottle. He was

likely wearing a short-brimmed hat with fold-down ear flaps, a blue short-sleeved, collared, button-neck polo shirt, a blue zippered jacket and gray or tan khaki pants.

Three weeks after Clewley was last seen by his wife, a curious twist in the case emerged when arriving family members found Clewley's dog outside his cabin at 2 a.m. Aug. 1.

Though he had lost about 20 percent of his body weight, the dog was healthy and clean. After a vet check, family members came to believe the nine-year-old dog had been cared for by someone over at least some of the time he was missing.

The vet said the dog lacked the bug bites, ticks and dirty appearance expected after three weeks in the woods. But the dog also lacked his characteristically loud, sharp bark and he carried a sad demeanor.

Anyone with information about the case is asked to contact Det. Sgt. Mike Bitnar at 440-3297.



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